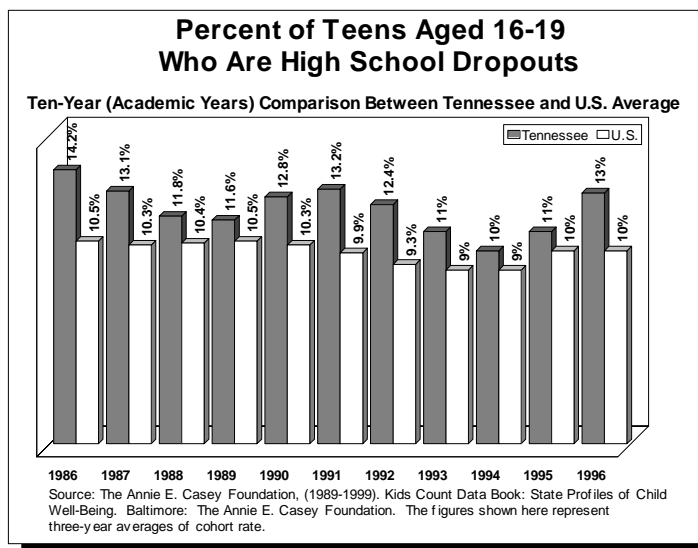


High School Dropouts

The 1996-97 Tennessee one-year school dropout rate for grades 9 through 12 was 4.5 percent, according to the 1998 Education Report Card released by the Tennessee Department of Education. However, the four-year cohort rate, the percentage of students who completed the eighth grade but dropped out before graduating, was 15.2 percent.

Nationally, 5 percent of students in grades 10 through 12 in October 1995 were not in school and had not graduated by the following October, according to the U.S. Department of Education (*The Condition of Education, 1998*).



The median earnings of those who drop out of school are significantly lower. In 1996, males ages 25 to 34 who had not finished high school earned 31 percent less than graduates, and female dropouts, 36 percent less. The dropouts were also three times as likely as high school graduates to receive welfare or public assistance (*The Condition of Education, 1998*).

The effect of school dropout is seen in studies of welfare reform and employment. Earnings of welfare recipients involved in welfare-to-work programs are higher by between 19 and 29 percent for those who had a high school diploma at the start of the programs than those who did not, according to a review of welfare reform research by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that during the next six years jobs requiring associate degrees or more will increase at a faster rate than those requiring less education. The highest rates of growth are expected in professional specialty and technical jobs.

School dropout effects are not solely economic. Much of the work of a community is done by its citizens. Educational level is positively related to civic participation (*The Condition of Education, 1998*). Membership in organizations, participation in community service activities, and voting and other political activities all rise with educational level.

Parents' choices affect their children's futures. Children whose parents dropped out of school are twice as likely to drop out as children whose parents have some college (*The Condition of Education, 1998*). National surveys, taken from 1972 to 1996, show that children from families with low incomes have been consistently more likely to drop out of school than those from middle and high incomes, according to the report.

Tennessee has an Adult High School program to assist dropouts. The Adult High Schools served 4,035 in FY 1997-98 and issued diplomas to 948 Tennesseans.